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THOUGHTS

ON THE

FREQUENCY OF DIVORCES

IN

MODERN TIMES,

AND ON

THE NECESSITY OF LEGISLATIVE EXERTION,

TO PREVENT

THEIR INCREASING PREVALENCE.

BY ADAM SIBBIT, M. A. Rector of Clarendon in the Island of Jamaica

Fœcunda culpæ fæcula nuptias
Primùm inquinavêre, et genus, et domos.
Hoc fonte derivata clades
In patriam populúmque fluxit.

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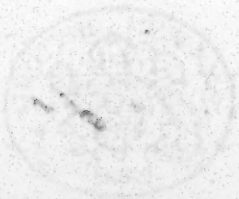

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THE abortive attempt which was made in the laſt Seſſion to enact a Law to prevent the crime of Adultery, has occaſioned the publication of the following pages; as it appears a ſubject of the higheſt importance in the moral world. Our Common Law (though in general ſo admirable) is rather inattentive to female affairs; otherwiſe it would make Adultery indictable, as well as actionable; a public crime, as well as a private injury. This was the object of the late attempt in Parliament; to make Adultery penal, and thus to enact a legal protection of the Marriage Bed. The Author wiſhes to add his feeble effort in the cauſe of public Virtue and national Morality.

THOUGHTS

THOUGHTS, &c.

AMONG the various inſtances of moral depravity which too clearly indicate the corruption of the age in which we live, the frequency of divorces, and the prevalence of lawleſs intrigues, are the features of degeneracy which at preſent give the greateſt alarm to the ſerious and reflecting part of the nation. There is no vice which has not a tendency to deform and to deprave, and, by ſlow approaches and inſenſible gradations, to undermine, and finally to deſtroy, the nobleſt inſtitutions. But the crime of *adultery* is one of thoſe great violations

of religion, and of law, that leads to the immediate deſtruction of all civil governments, and human happineſs.—The beautiful rite of marriage is of divine origin: it was ordained by our all-wiſe and benevolent Creator, for the beſt and nobleſt purpoſes; and from this grand inſtitution, ſociety derives its ſtrength, virtue her luſtre, and modeſty her charms. Man and woman, joined together in holy wedlock, afford a moſt intereſting ſpectacle for the philoſopher to contemplate, and the philanthropiſt to admire, as it is from a due regard to this ſacred union, that the dignity and purity of human nature are principally preſerved. What can, indeed, be more delightful, for the man of feeling and ſentiment, than to ſee an amiable pair employed in the tender offices of bringing up, and ſuperintending a family, and

and anxiouſly endeavouring to impreſs upon the minds of their offspring the pure precepts of virtue? It is in thoſe domeſtic eſtabliſhments, where proper ſentiments and principles are imbibed, and it is only while they continue to preſerve their *purity* and *delicacy*, that the general manners of the nation can be wholeſome and ſound.

If, then, the connubial ſtate, which is the principal pillar of ſocial order and moral excellence, ſhould ever fall into diſrepute, or be ſuffered to be inſulted, we may conſider that country, wherever it prevails, to be deeply ſunk in profaneneſs and profligacy; for, if we permit the faireſt and moſt beautiful refinement of religion and of ethics to be neglected and violated, we muſt ſoon fall into a deplorable ſtate of ani-

mal degradation, as we then diveſt ourſelves of the noble diſcriminating feature of poliſhed ſociety, and loſe one of the moſt valuable privileges of civilized life. Every pious man, and lover of his country, therefore, muſt be equally alarmed at any attempt, or any ſet of opinions, which are unfavourable to an inſtitution ſo honourable and beneficial in its nature, and ſo conducive to our public and private proſperity and happineſs.

The frequency of divorces in modern times, has been long viewed, by the ſtateſman and the moraliſt, with the greateſt ſolicitude and concern; but at preſent, the crime of adultery ſeems to prevail to ſuch a degree, as to threaten the very exiſtence of ſociety. It does not only rage in our voluptuous metropolis, and in the ſplendid regions of high life, but

but obſcure towns, and rural haunts, have caught the dire contagion; and if an immediate ſtop be not put to the ravages of this lamentable vice, the whole maſs of our morals muſt inevitably be corrupted: all the wholeſome chyle, and pure blood of our conſtitution, will be vitiated by this deluge of licentiouſneſs. We cannot therefore behold, but with the greateſt regret, the little regard which is now frequently paid to an engagement which is ſo eſſential to the preſervation of all morality. "At lovers' vows Jove laughs," as the poet ſays, may be the faſhionable creed of the diſsipated and the thoughtleſs; yet theſe ſentiments, even in the gay days of courtſhip, are uncandid and ungenerous, and can only be practiſed by a deſpicable coquette, or a vain coxcomb, wretches, without honour, and

without ſenſibility; but to violate that vow which is made at the ſacred altar, is at once to inſult the majeſty of our laws, and the command of Heaven. I therefore come forward, though I have not the ſpear of Achilles, or the arrows of Teucer, to contend, at leaſt, on the ſide of virtue, and to expreſs my abhorrence of a crime ſo highly diſhonourable to our national manners, and ſo hoſtile to all religion and morality. I ſhall, conſequently, proceed to conſider ſome of the cauſes which, I conceive, have a tendency to produce the crime now under our contemplation; and then make a few obſervations on the adoption of meaſures which ſeem moſt conducive to prevent its prevalence. I ſhall, in the firſt place, take a view of the *education*, *habits*, and *manners*, of the women of the preſent age; for,

ſor, in a queſtion of this kind, they may be conſidered as very materially concerned; and the frequency, or infrequency of divorces, is a criterion by which the ſtate of morals, among the fair ſex, may, in a great meaſure, be eſtimated.

The principal deſign and end of all education and inſtruction is, to improve our nature, to correct our wayward diſpoſitions, and to ſhow us the path of Virtue. And the divine and luminous precepts of Religion and Morality happily produce theſe ſalutary effects, as they exalt and ſtrengthen our reaſoning powers, meliorate our hearts, and moderate the tyranny of the paſsions. The great inſtructors of wiſdom and virtue, in every age, after having profoundly meditated upon the nature and propenſities of man; after

having ſeverely ſcanned and analyſed his intellectual and animal powers, clearly ſaw, that the only effectual method to refine and purify humanity, was to eſtabliſh, upon a firm and ſolid baſis, the empire of the mind, and to correct and to ſubdue, to the utmoſt of their power, all irregular deſires and ſenſual appetites. The noble deſign, therefore, of Religion and Philoſophy, is to make the human race ſtand pre-eminent in this lower world, as intellectual beings, endowed with the high powers of reaſon and reflection, and to ſoar above mere animals of appetite. The ſpirit and genius, therefore, of all ſyſtems of education, ſhould be chiefly directed to enlighten a ſet of beings who have fallen from their original excellence, and to teach them the great duties which they owe to God and to man;

man; and the great end, the *ultimatum* of all ſtudy and mental acquirements, is to make us act well our parts in the great theatre of the world—to become, in fine, virtuous members of ſociety. Now, I fear that the whole ſyſtem of modern female education is directly oppoſite to what we conceive to be the principal deſign of all inſtruction. In the faſhionable boarding-ſchools, in the polite ſeminaries in the vicinity of the metropolis, and, indeed, all over the kingdom, the ſhewy and ſplendid accompliſhments are chiefly attended to, with little regard to uſeful and ſolid acquirements. Every art *(a)* which can

(a) Motus doceri gaudet Ionicos
Matura virgo, et fingitur artubus
Jam nunc . . . . . .

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add

add luſtre to beauty, every air and every grace, which are moſt likely to captivate and to faſcinate the gazer, and to rivet him in chains, are ſtudied by the nymphs with extreme ſolicitude; while ſerious reading and moral lectures are ſeldom heard. In no age, indeed, was ever literature more cultivated by the women than the preſent; but it is, unfortunately, moſtly confined to a kind of books which, inſtead of ennobling and ſtrengthening the mind, have rather a tendency to debilitate and to relax it, and ſo far to vitiate and to deprave, that they have eminently contributed to extend the conqueſts of the libertine, and to ſpare the ſeducer many of his inſidious arts. The voluptuous pages of the diſtinguiſhed Citizen of Geneva, the ravings of *Werter*, the impudently profane leſſons of the *Monk*, and

and all that horde of licentious miſcreants, whoſe writings can only tend to dethrone Reaſon and to ſet fire to the paſsions, are now devoured and gorged by *Miſs in her teens*; while the delicate pages of Addiſon, and the noble precepts of the immortal author of the Rambler, are hardly known. If poetry be the theme, the ſoft ſighs of *Eloiſa* to *Abelard*, and the warm effuſions of *Sappho* to *Phaon*, all frantic with ardent love and wild deſire, are the favourite pieces; and the divine Milton, and the ſublimely moralizing Young, are now almoſt expelled from the flimſy and amorous library of a modern fine lady *(b.)* Thus the whole

(b) The peruſal of books of this deſcription are not only incapable of affording any uſeful or ſolid information, but they deprave the mind and the taſte

whole tenor of the preſent plan of female ſtudies, has rather a tendency to irri-

taſte to ſuch a degree, that they deſtroy all reliſh for authors of a ſuperior claſs. Divinity, Morality, Hiſtory, and Science, are too *cold* and *unintereſting* for the warm imaginations of the *readers of Romance*. Nothing but the outré, the luſcious, and the unnatural, can pleaſe them. Every thing muſt be deeply coloured, and hovering on the boundaries of abſurdity: *Arabian Nights Entertainments*, *Spaniſh Gallantry*, *German Bombaſt*, licentiouſneſs covered over with a cobweb veil, are the only food which their depraved appetites can heartily feed upon. In fine, the abuſe of writings of this kind is carried ſo far, and the public taſte, in conſequence of it, is ſo ſtrangely vitiated, that *Memoirs of Women of the Town*, containing impudent and diſguſting details of proſtitution and infamy; *Confeſſions*, whoſe ſhocking tales of ſenſuality, and horrid groſſneſs, are rather the ebullitions of an *Ourang Outang*, or a *libidinous Goat*, than of a man; and the *Love-letters* of a *modern Amazon*, con-

irritate and to inflame the paſsions, than to improve or to ſtrengthen the powers of reaſon; and the natural conſequence of ſuch precepts, and ſentiments, is certainly to inſpire a propenſity to voluptuouſneſs, and to deſtroy that delicacy of thought, that exquiſite

temptible for their nonſenſe, but amorous and indelicate, have been read with the greateſt avidity, and are among the moſt popular of our publications. Can we wonder, then, at our incontinence and levity, and the frequency of our *faux paux*, and the long liſt of *crim. cons.* when ſuch are our inſtructors and favoutite authors? They have, in fact, the ſame effect upon the mind that diſſipation has upon the body; they infeeble and emaſculate all our faculties, and utterly deſtroy that elevation of character which is neceſſary to produce greatneſs of ſentiment, energy of action, and purity of manners: they ruin our nobler part, and only leave behind a ſoft, flimſy, and deſpicable ſenſualiſt.

poliſh

poliſh of mental purity, which is ſo favourable to virtue, and ſo charming to contemplate. The mind of the virgin, "blooming with roſy ſmiles," ſhould be the ſeat of the *cherub Innocence*, unſullied and untainted with one immodeſt idea. Baniſh, then, thoſe fatal, inſidious books, which are more hoſtile to female virtue than brutal *Tarquin*, and all the libertines: for when the heart is ſtained with indelicacies, there is an end of true modeſty; and virtue then is but a name. This ſpecies of reading, therefore, inſtead of making women wiſer and better, and more fit to perform the duties of domeſtic life, annihilates all their moral and mental energies, and forms a character at once *romantic*, *capricious*, *inconſtant*, and *viſionary*. A heated imagination, and a weak mind, generally mark the

racters of the *devourers* of novels; and while they *talk* and *prate* of ſentiment *(c)*

(c) The faſhionable reading of the age, and the modern drama (I mean novels, and tranſlations of German plays) generate a degree of *fictitious ſenſibility*, which is certainly inimical to the practice of real virtue; a ſoftneſs, and effeminacy of mind, without any active benevolence. We have, therefore, a great many *ſentimental ladies*, who weep and mourn at artificial diſtreſs, though they can behold the calamities of real life with the moſt frigid indifference. They "ſigh their ſouls in love," the tear of ſympathy flows, the boſom throbs with ſorrow, at the repreſentation of ſcenic miſery; yet they can drive the beggar from their gate with the moſt unfeeling contumely and neglect. Doſt thou call this humanity and generous pity, to whine and whimper at *Pizarro* and the *Stranger*, yet feel no pang of commiſeration for the real children of adverſity? No; it is only the voluptuous ſpaſms and effuſions of *Sybarites* and *Tarentines*, who feel ſome pleaſurable emotions at theſe mimic exhibitions, and ſhrink and fly, like the Prieſt

ment and liberality, and all the hackneied terms of French ſophiſts and German

Prieſt and the Levite in the Goſpel, from the ſight of actual woe. It is not the ſolitary widow, nor the orphan, nor thoſe who ſuffer "neceſſity's ſharp pinch," whom thoſe *delicate creatures* delight to ſolace and to relieve: the very appearance of real miſery throws them *into fits*; they are ſo indolent and luxurious, that they want even energy to perform a noble action; all their virtue is in ſpeculation, and lies in the regions of romance. The Epicurean precepts, therefore, which they imbibe, in direct oppoſition to Chriſtianity and truth, inſtead of teaching them to reſiſt the blandiſhments of pleaſure, and perform *good deeds*, render them more feeble and frail, more eager after ſelfiſh gratifications, and more callous to the ſufferings of others. And here I cannot forbear regretting, both in a moral and literary point of view, the preſent ſtate of our theatrical amuſements. The beautiful compoſitions of our matchleſs Bard, ſweet Fancy's favourite child, whoſe wild wood-notes are ſo delightful, and upon whom the tragic and comic Muſe were equally laviſh

man quacks, they often violate, by their conduct, the nobleſt and moſt honour-

laviſh of their favours, now ſeldom grace our ſtage. Learned Johnſon, and divine Shakeſpeare, are baniſhed by the theatric Goths and Vandals of modern times. Faithful delineations of "many-coloured life," and the nobleſt productions of genius, now give place to tumid declamation, gaudy pageantry, pompous proceſſions, mummery, and grimace. Can there be a more deciſive, or a more melancholy proof of our total want of all taſte, than to prefer the contemptible bombaſt of a *Kotzebue* to the truth and beauty of Shakeſpeare? Is there a man, whom "true genius kindles, or fair fame inſpires," who can bear, with patience, to ſee the Harlequin trumpery of German empyrics ſuperſede the unparalleled compoſitions of *Avon's Bard*, to whom proud Greece, and mighty Rome, muſt bow? He is the Poet whoſe vaſt mind "graſped the whole orb of nature." The true deſign of the drama is to raiſe the mind, and to mend the heart; but the drift of the productions of this Gothic ſchool, which of late has been ſo

honourable of the virtues, and fall an eaſy prey to the *Lovelaces* and *Lotharios* of the day. All dignity of mind, and purity of principle, are thus broken down by mad romance, licentious *billet-doux*, and ridiculous declamation. And

much reliſhed, is directly calculated to deceive and to miſlead the inexperienced, by gilding vice, by apologiſing for licentiouſneſs, by putting high-flown ſentiments into the mouths of ſavages, and by diſtorted and unnatural repreſentations of mankind. I am only ſorry to perceive ſuch writings tolerated by an Engliſh audience; and notwithſtanding their rant, and their talking much about virtue, the moral of moſt of their pieces is generally a bad one; and, in my opinion, they are no leſs hoſtile to ſound principles than to true taſte. I therefore earneſtly hope that the rage after novelty and nonſenſe will at laſt ſubſide, and that our winter amuſements will again be dignified and ennobled by the repreſentation of thoſe admirable compoſitions which at once charm the fancy, and inſtruct the mind.

the

the impudent libertine, and the ſycophantic fortune-hunter, now even vaunt of their eaſy conqueſts, and the laurels which they have won in the envied fields of gallantry. The dignity of virtue, indeed, can awe the bold intruder; chaſte *Penelope's look and mien* could repel the moſt audacious profligate; but we are ſorry to obſerve that the *Cyprian dreſs*, and *Cyprian manners*, of the ladies of our times, are far from being calculated to promote their true intereſt, or to protect their honour. They may, 'tis true, attract the ſenſualiſt's lawleſs ſtare; but they will ever diſguſt the man of ſentiment, and of taſte; and the moraliſt always views with ſolicitude, and with a ſigh, the leaſt deviation from delicacy in female decorations—an unequivocal ſymptom of decay in national morality. While thus the

purity and ſimplicity of our manners are declining, and the whole ſpirit of female education is ſo much on the ſide of levity, there is another cauſe which, I am of opinion, contributes greatly to increaſe the buſineſs of *Doctors Commons*. The age in which we live, is marked by a ſpirit of oſtentation; every thing now is almoſt ſacrificed to *appearances:* it is, indeed, the natural conſequence of the ſtate of ſociety at which we have arrived. We are become very luxurious and diſſipated; our wants and deſires are immenſe; and wealth is now coveted, with extreme eagerneſs, by all claſſes of people, in order to enable them to gratify the number and variety of their inordinate paſsions. Now, this mercenary and venal diſpoſition, which has ſo deeply impreſſed all ranks of mankind,

kind, is one cauſe why we perceive ſo many marriages produce miſery and diſguſt, which ultimately lead to infidelity. This ſolemn engagement ſhould not be made *unadviſedly* or *lightly*; it ſhould be the offspring of honour, ſincerity, and affection. There is no ſublunary union ſo delicate and ſo beautiful, when it is formed upon proper motives and principles; it is friendſhip, of the pureſt and moſt exalted kind, ſoftened and animated by the charm of love. It is the moſt refined and tender of all alliances, and capable of the higheſt felicity. Yet this engagement ſhould never take place but from the nobleſt motives. If it be made from the baſe allurements of lucre, from vanity, ſenſuality, or any of the meaner or lower appetites, it is not the ſacred union which I mean; and it will ter-

minate in wretchedneſs. Matrimonial connections, therefore, ſhould never be formed, but from a mutual conſciouſneſs, in the contracting parties, of reciprocal eſteem, flowing from an admiration and reverence of *moral* and *mental* excellence, as well as from perſonal elegance. Let the flame divine of love proceed from an adoration of the amiable and generous qualities of the mind and of the heart, which do not ſwiftly fade and wither, like the tranſient flower of beauty, but wear a perennial bloom, and increaſe in value the more they are contemplated and known. In the objects of our choice, we ſhould endeavour to have the delightful aſſemblage of *moral* and *perſonal* excellence; and then our attachments will be faithful and permanent.—But how far the preſent practice of the

the world deviates from theſe principles, in forming connubial connections, the ſlighteſt knowledge of mankind will ſufficiently ſhow. For, from the inordinate love of riches, and from the oſtentation and extravagance of the times, we perceive the altar of Hymen conſtantly profaned by hypocrites and diſſemblers, who are joined together, from no other motives but thoſe of the moſt ſelfiſh and mercenary kind. How can ſuch unions be auſpicious? How can they be productive of domeſtic happineſs, when, inſtead of honour and love, the baſer and lower paſsions are the ſole attractive cauſe? The rage of wealth, and love of ſhow, is become ſo great and predominant a paſsion, with many women of the preſent age, that they will forſake the moſt elegant *Adonis*, who is even in poſſeſsion of

their hearts, and unite themſelves to the *meaneſt* and *uglieſt* of mankind, provided he can keep the *ſplendid coach*, "*the long train of pampered horſes and grooms, beſmeared with gold.*" They ſacrifice themſelves now, with little reſerve, at the venal ſhrine of *Plutus*. Is there a Nabob, loaded with treaſures from the banks of the Ganges, however hideous and haggard, is there a vulgar clown, or upſtart *prig*, ſuddenly become rich, but with the greateſt facility can lead to "the Nuptial Bower," the poliſhed nymph, blooming in all the pride of youth and beauty? Can there be any reciprocity of affection there? Impoſsible; and when a mercenary female thus devotes her perſon and her charms to the loathſome and nauſeous embrace of ſome dotard, or driveller, we are not to be ſurpriſed that

that infamy and proſtitution are the unhappy conſequences of ſo unnatural and ſo unequal an union. Again, do we not ſee hordes of rapacious and deſperate adventurers—a race admirably adapted for the buſineſs in which they embark, with hearts of marble, and fronts of braſs, yet too frequently admitted into the favour of the ladies, by their eaſy manners, and by their bold and brilliant addreſs, ſwarming in every public place, and eloping with women, merely for the ſake of their fortunes? Is there now a handſome Enſign, or City Beau, who does not conſider *match-making* as a trade? and even the pert Barriſter, and faſhionable Prieſt, whoſe inferior talents *(d)* incapacitate them to

(c) It is only minor abilities which can be of any uſe in this *employment*. The honeſt pride, and the

to riſe to fortune, and to fame, by nobler means, often take the field of gallantry, and unite themſelves, without affection, and without eſteem, to ſome *opulent* or ſome *titled* dame. How, then, can the ſanctimonious ſtate of wed-

the clear integrity of men of virtue and of great mental powers, muſt ever deſpiſe all the baſe arts of intrigue. They are highly ſuſceptible of honourable attachments, but ſtrangers to illicit amours. It is only little beings, who can ſtoop to ſmall and minute objects, who can be conſtantly and officiouſly attentive, to flatter, to lie, and to cringe, that are calculated for the obſequiouſneſs of gallantry; and impudence, vivacity, and levity, qualify a perſon for this art, much better than ſuperiority of mind and delicacy of ſentiment. And a man *of the world*, as he is termed, with a certain kind of experience, and happily endowed with a conſiderable portion of effrontery, makes a more brilliant figure at a ball, and more conqueſts among the ladies, than the firſt genius of the age. The audacious, the volatile, and the vain, are here of

wedlock be preſerved immaculate and pure, when ſuch alliances are formed, without ſincerity, and without principle? The conſequences of ſuch connections, are mutual contempt and diſguſt, which generally terminate in infidelity.

of more conſequence than they who poſſeſs the talents of *Pitt* or *Demoſthenes*. The latter is human nature in a grand and ſublime ſcale, governing and enlightening the world by wiſdom and eloquence; the former is the diminutive *Homuncio*, little ſuperior to an ape, who, by immoral conduct and criminal intrigues, degrades his ſpecies, and corrupts ſociety. Yet ſuch are the *Heroes of Venus's Court*, nothing can withſtand their impudence, the *ſine qua non* in gallantry. And as the number of this nefarious and deſpicable fraternity is daily increaſing, to the terror of huſbands and fathers, and the deſtruction of morality, it is become abſolutely neceſſary that the Legiſlature ſhould deviſe ſome more effectual methods to defend ſociety from their deſperate attacks.

Now, among all the vices which prevail in corrupt and vicious ages, there is no enormity which ſo completely and radically affects our public manners, as a violation of the nuptial contract. Order, purity, and decorum, ſhould ever reign in domeſtic eſtabliſhments. There the ſweet leſſons of virtue are firſt learned, there our principles are formed, and there our character receives its *tone* and *colour*, and ſpreads its influence in ſociety. When this great ſource of ſocial life, therefore, is pure and untainted, its ſalutary and delightful ſtreams diffuſe ſtrength and energy over the whole community. *The voice of joy and health is in the dwellings of the righteous*; and ſurely, if happineſs is to be found here below, it is in the boſom of a well-regulated and virtuous family.

If,

If, then, from education and the faſhion of the times, we ſhould ſee this ineſtimable inſtitution, which is the primary cauſe of ſuch felicity, to be leſs regarded and reſpected, we cannot but be alarmed at the ſtate of our national morals. The *Ægiſthus* and *Clytemneſtras* of the day, therefore, are not ſlight offenders; their crimes, in a religious and political point of view, are great and capital, as they ſtrike at the root of all ſocial order, and human dignity, and tend to overthrow the nobleſt pillar of poliſhed ſociety. Health, Beauty, and Energy, are the fair offspring of Virtue; Debility, Treachery, and Infamy, that of odious Vice. Caſt your eye over the page of hiſtory, look at the annals of every nation, and you will uniformly perceive, that their downfall and deſtruction always proceeded

ceeded from diſſolute morals. And the manners of the women, in every ſtate, have always arrived at their laſt climax of corruption immediately preceding its extinction. The Roman women became ſuch monſters of wickedneſs, that they may be conſidered as among the principal cauſes of the ruin of that illuſtrious people. All the military ſkill of *Pyrrhus*, and the matchleſs valour of the intrepid *Hannibal*, could not overthrow the glorious capital of the world; but it ſoon fell, when its inhabitants were degraded and vitiated by lawleſs amours, and infamous debauch. Female profligacy, therefore, was one of the leading cauſes of the general licentiouſneſs which prevailed during the latter periods of the Roman empire; and their abandoned conduct was chiefly produced from a want of a due regard

to the marriage contract. If we direct our attention to modern times, we may perceive the ſame cauſes producing the ſame effects. Previous to the French revolution, the morals of the women had arrived at a pitch of corruption which ſhocks the man of ſentiment to reflect upon. Every thing that is hideous in monſtrous luſt, all the madneſs of the wildeſt caprice, boundleſs extravagance, and the moſt inſolent vanity, were carried to the utmoſt exceſs; and the orgies of the Furies of Paris were more horrible and obſcene than any of the enormities that were practiſed in the profane and indecent myſteries of the *Bona Dea.* They had, indeed, attained to ſuch a degree of impudence in vice, and were ſo completely and thoroughly callous to all

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ſenſe of honour and of ſhame, that the very names of *Seducer*, *Adultereſs*, and *Cuckold*, were no longer held in deteſtation and deriſion; and the fiend Licentiouſneſs ſtalked unreſtrained over the land, ſpreading contagion into every houſe: the effects of which were a total deſtruction of every principle that holds together the links of civil communities, and which terminated in anarchy and rebellion. And this muſt happen in every ſtate, whenever the morals of the people have arrived at their laſt ſtage of depravity; for when the whole maſs is diſſolved in corruption, a fermentation and effervescence muſt take place, from the very nature of the component parts. And this is the cauſe of the tumults and inſurrections of degenerate nations, which, in the

the end of their career, ſo frequently break out into paroxyſms of cruelty and diſorder; and, after committing all the enormities and maſſacres of ſavages, they generally ſink, at laſt, into the ſupine ſlumbers of deſpotiſm. The attentive obſerver of life, and the philoſophic moraliſt, therefore, cannot behold the ſigns and features of theſe times, but with the greateſt ſolicitude, and without making ſome exertions in a cauſe in which religion and ethics are ſo deeply intereſted. An illuſtrious nobleman *, whoſe talents, and whoſe virtues, have long acquired him the eſteem of his country, made lately a generous effort to bring into parliament a bill to prevent the prevalence of adultery, a crime, which

* Lord Auckland.

we have ſeen, is above all others the moſt fatal to our morals. His laudable exertions have been ſupported, in an auguſt aſſembly, by moſt of thoſe Senators whom England conſiders as her greateſt ornaments, the *Catos* and *Tullys* of our times, adorned with every virtue which can grace humanity, and with talents, too, at once ſo ſplendid and ſo profound, that poliſhed Athens, and illuſtrious Rome, would have been proud to have acknowledged them for their own. I bow with reverence, and look up with veneration, to thoſe great men, who, at a period when every thing is crumbling into voluptuouſneſs and impotence, ſtill ſupport, by the greateſt abilities *the majeſty of virtue.* And we cannot but view with contempt and abhorrence the *Clodius* and the *Petronius* of every nation, and of every age.

age. For it is wretches of this deſcription, who ruin, by their precepts and example, every ſtate. And, though the wiſe and beneficent endeavours of the great luminaries of our church and ſtate, have not been carried into effect, let us ſtill hope, that if they will perſevere in their generous efforts, they may yet be crowned with ſucceſs. Time and reflection, and the aſpect of the age, may yet point out the neceſsity of the interpoſition of the legiſlature, to protect more fully a contract which is ſo eſſential to the preſervation of order in ſociety. If, indeed, there ever was a period which demanded the manly ſtruggles of the ſtern moraliſt, it is, certainly, the preſent. For, if we do not reſiſt the torrent of licentiouſneſs, and vigorouſly oppoſe the precepts and practice of the infidel and

the libertine, we muſt ſink, with all our boaſted wealth, into weakneſs and contempt. Vice unnerves and debilitates the greateſt and nobleſt nations; and there can be only real and permanent energy and ſtrength, where Virtue deigns to dwell. We muſt, then, labour with all our force, to maintain the ſacred influence of religion and morality among us, as we regard the happineſs of our families, and the welfare of our country. And, in order to begin at the fountain-head of ſociety, and to erect pure temples under every roof, we muſt guard with the utmoſt reverence the heavenly rite of marriage. If the awful voice of conſcience, and the holy precepts of religion, have not ſufficient force, in an abandoned age, to awe the audacity of the profligate, recourſe muſt be had to coercive laws, to reſiſt the depre-

depredations of thoſe nefarious diſturbers of domeſtic happineſs. The Scythian ſpoiler, or wild Arab, who ravages lands and deſolates villages, and all the barbarians of the North, who have ſo often ſpread confuſion and terror over the world, are not more to be dreaded by the lovers of political dignity and order, than the *ſeducer* and *adultereſs*, who ruin, by their contagious example, the morals of their country. It is, therefore, neceſſary that the energies of our laws ſhould be fully exerted to impede the progreſs of thoſe vices which, in their nature, lead to the deſtruction of all decency, and to the annihilation of government itſelf. Now it appears pretty evident, that no regulation could be deviſed more effectual, to prevent the frequency of the crime of adultery, than to prohibit the offending parties

from uniting in wedlock: for perhaps there is no argument which aſsiſts more powerfully the ſeducer's arts, and faſcinates the credulous female, than the hope of being afterwards united to the object of her affections. And if the two culprits, after having violated all divine and human laws, are afterwards ſuffered to be married, it is to hold out a temptation to commit a crime, and to reward infamy. We are even arrived at times when it is ſtrongly ſuſpected that there is often a colluſion in the parties. And if this is the caſe, and if it ſhould become the general practice, it would virtually make the marriage contract of no effect. What does it avail to be united in holy wedlock, if this ſacred tie is to be diſſolved from inconſtancy and caprice. Shall the bold intruder, this man of gallantry, immodeſt and unprincipled,

principled, but deeply verſed in Cupid's arts, wean the affections of a wife from her lawful huſband, and then have their illicit love crowned with opulence and with eaſe? Shall theſe miſcreants of ſenſuality even riot in the ſpoils of this injured, plundered man, who, ſunk in melancholy, or frantic with deſpair, ſees his betrayers, inſtead of meeting with puniſhment and contempt, triumphantly march to the altar of Hymen, which they have already profaned, and, with the greateſt effrontery, make a figure in the faſhionable world, and pretend to all the reſpectability of the moſt virtuous pair? Is not this to confound the diſtinctions of virtue and vice, and to ſet at nought the moſt valuable inſtitution of ſociety? It is to fan the ardour of deſire, and to facilitate the arts of ſeduction; to make a *Meſſe-*

lina more prodigal of her luſt, and her Paramours more audacious. It is, then, certainly expedient for the laws of any country to endeavour to prevent the completion of the criminal wiſhes of perſons who are violating, by their conduct, a duty of the firſt magnitude in ſocial life. And it is generally held to be a wiſe meaſure, by legiſlators and philoſophers, to throw every impediment in the way of vice, and to make infamy and contempt ever the lot of its votaries.

We are to reſiſt and to counteract the tyranny and violence of the paſsions of weak mortals by the divine precepts of religion, and the ſage regulations and ordinances of wiſdom and philoſophy; and, conſequently, the great deſign of all laws is, to prevent poliſhed and

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ſocial man from being ſo much the ſlave of appetite as to relapſe into the ſavage, and to interrupt the peace and ſecurity of the community. To make him, in fine, a more amiable and intelligent being, to bring into action all the noble powers of the mind, and to inſpire the finer ſenſibilities of the heart. And as the delicate inſtitution of marriage contributes, in an eminent degree, to produce thoſe great advantages, being the happy parent of moſt of the gentler virtues, it is to be faithfully guarded and protected by the wiſe and good of every deſcription. And this important queſtion, which we are now diſcuſsing, is not only of the utmoſt conſequence to the cauſe of religion and morality, but, as I have already obſerved, it is equally connected with government, and with politics. If piety

and virtue, therefore, will not rouſe a certain claſs of men to protect the marriage contract, let me hold out to their view, that anarchy and horror, and the ſubverſion of empires, are the certain conſequences of a want of reverence to the nuptial rite. Let the rapacious miſer, let this hoarder of wealth, whom nothing can move from the lethargy of indolence but *gold*, and let him who boaſts of ſplendid *villas*, and of wide *domains*, ſeriouſly conſider that every thing which they poſſeſs, entirely depends upon the ſtability of government, and that the permanence of every ſtate is intimately connected with its morals. And *morals*, *modeſty*, and *marriage*, may be reciprocally conſidered as cauſe and effect; the one cannot exiſt without the other. If no other argument, therefore, but baſe ſelf-intereſt, will have any

any effect upon this ſordid group, let them with trembling hear that confiſcation, robbery, rapine, and murder, are the dreadful ſcenes which always cloſe the laſt days of a profligate nation. Let them, then, as they love their lucre, and their lands, arm themſelves in the cauſe of virtue.

But it is not to the venal and mercenary tribe, or to puny fops, and gaudy inſects of gallantry, fluttering in the *ring* of pleaſure, diſſolved in voluptuouſneſs, or ſtupified by debauchery, from whom we can expect any grand or noble exertions, either to protect our civil and religious rights, or to defend virtue. To look for vigour and magnanimity of conduct from this debilitated herd, is fruitleſs and vain. Yet, while we view with anxious ſolicitude this critical period, the tumultuous

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ſtate of Europe, and the manners of the times, our hopes are rouſed, and ſpirits elated; beams of illumination ariſe, and throw their radiance over the moral world, when we perceive the efforts which ſome of the moſt able and enlightened men of the kingdom are making, to reſiſt baleful opinions, and to promote our domeſtic and public happineſs. I view with pleaſure the honeſt zeal of the *Aucklands* and the *Eldons*, men formed by nature to inſtruct, and to bleſs ſociety, by the happy union of the brighteſt talents and the moſt amiable virtues. The cauſe, then, which they have eſpouſed with ſo much generous ardour, will, I truſt, be ultimately carried into effect *(e)*; and I do not ſay too much when

(e) In treating of this ſubject, it is impoſſible to omit paying a tribute of grateful acknowledgment to

when I add, that it is the general wiſh of the country. We are not yet, I hope, ſo

to a character to whom his country, in my opinion, is under great obligations: I mean that truly great and upright Judge who ſits at the head of the Court of King's Bench. The profound legal knowledge, the penetration, the accuracy, and the diligence, and all the great and rare qualities which conſtitute the conſummate judicial character, are poſſeſſed by Lord Kenyon in the moſt eminent degree. His intellectual powers are all of the moſt acute and vigorous kind, and admirably adapted to his profeſsion and ſituation; and though the high ſtation which this great perſonage now fills, has been held by men of the moſt tranſcendent abilities, his mental excellence is equal to the ableſt of his predeceſſors; and it is univerſally allowed, that no one ever diſcovered ſo much zeal and ardour in defence of our morals, as the preſent Lord Chief Juſtice of England, which, in an age of levity and diſſipation, is certainly of the greateſt conſequence to the community, and muſt be attended with the moſt beneficial conſequences. *Cato of Utica*, or

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ſo far in our political wane, nor ſo much loſt to all ſenſe of dignity, that elo-

magnanimous *Brutus*, were not more upright in their intentions than this great man; and all his deciſions are the dictates of wiſdom and juſtice, animated by a laudable abhorrence of infamy and wickedneſs. And whenever he expreſſes his indignation at vices of a deeper die, it is the generous ardour of a mind, pure and ſublime, boldly rebuking the daring and impious violators of our peace, and deſtroyers of our happineſs. It is the glow of Virtue, excited by the inſolence of Vice, nobly ſtruggling to protect the innocent, and appal the guilty.—Venerable and illuſtrious man, continue to watch over and defend our morals and our laws, with your wonted paternal care! Your honourable zeal, and your intrepid firmneſs, in protecting our beſt and deareſt rights, have long acquired you the eſteem and love of your country; and if you have a foe, it is only he who is an enemy of virtue: and as the bright luſtre which encircled the great Conſul's brow, was formerly beheld by the Catilinean crew with envious malignity,

eloquence, and learning, and virtue, can be conquered by the feeble efforts of ſuperficial declamation, petulance, and frivolity. Our *Macedonian Phalanx* is not to be vanquiſhed by the *ſilken troops of Perſepolis.* The grand views, and pure intentions of theſe great guardians of our ſtate, will, I

lignity, and ſacred dread, ſo the diſsipated herd of modern times view your Lordſhip, and ſometimes raiſe their puny and contemptible voice, to arraign your upright conduct; but be aſſured, that they (whoſe cavillings are negative applauſe) are the only part of the community who do not look up to you with gratitude and veneration, and conſider you as one of the beſt friends of religion and morality, and a benefactor to that nation in which you ſo deſervedly hold a high an important ſtation.—I am no hireling writer, " nor proſtitute to praiſe;" I am entirely unknown to Lord Kenyon; but I cannot reſiſt the impulſe which I feel, in giving this public teſtimony of my high reſpect for ſo ineſtimable a character.

truſt,

truſt, prevail. And though irreligion and immorality are making the moſt audacious encroachments, and ſpreading every where their baleful influence, we can ſtill boaſt that we have, in *Britain's iſle*, an illuſtrious band of genuine patriots, able to oppoſe the enemies of our morals and our laws, and that men of the moſt exalted rank, and firſt genius, nobly fight in the ſacred cauſe of virtue. And while we perceive, with the moſt heart-felt ſatisfaction, theſe benefactors of mankind, thus generouſly labour to repel the licentious ſpirit of the age, and to preſerve a proper ſenſe of religion and decency in ſociety, we anxiouſly hope that the parents and inſtructors of youth, will alſo co-operate in their exertions in this moſt important buſineſs. It is the duty, indeed, of every one whoſe boſom glows for his country's

country's welfare, or to whom piety and virtue are dear; and we particularly beg leave to recommend, from ſome obſervation and experience, a little more circumſpection and care in the education and *reading* of the female ſex. And, after the pure precepts of religion and morality are planted in the tender breaſt, let not theſe precious ſeeds of inſtruction be obliterated by the pernicious peruſal of improper books, which too often happens, and which have tended, more than any other cauſe, to relax the morals of the Engliſh nation *(f)*. And, if the fair would

(f) The *Free-thinkers*, the *Noveliſts*, and the *Dilettanti*, that puny and contemptible group of Sciolifts, Fribbles, and Voluptuaries, ſome of whoſe productions the groſſeſt Satyrs of the woods, and the obſcene *Galli*, *the infamous Prieſts of Cybele*, would bluſh to peruſe, may be conſidered as prin-

would wiſh to preſerve their true power, and to bleſs ſociety with their refining influence, they cannot be too careful to preſerve their *delicacy*, immaculate and unſullied. The charm of beauty has irreſiſtible force, when it is attended with modeſty: whereſoever it is beheld, it captivates and delights. But it is the

cipal inſtruments in corrupting the underſtanding, and the taſte of the age. They wiſh, as it ſhould ſeem, to tear up by the roots every thing that is great and ſublime in human nature, and to level us with the brutes. To prevent us from purſuing worthy objects, to withdraw from our aſpiring view the contemplation of *life*, *death*, and *immortality*, and every noble ſtudy, which teacheth us to ſoar to the "Heaven of Heavens, to draw empyreal air;" and to imbibe their own groveling ſentiments, which can only tend to rivet us to earth, and to duſt and aſhes. What! ſhall thoſe feeble and ſuperficial dabblers, who are only fit to be companions of a *Nero*, or an *Otho*, and panders

the pure mantle of Innocence which arms this Goddeſs with all her power. It is this which makes the village maid more lovely than if adorned with all the gems which deck the proudeſt Ducheſs. Caſt away this magic veil of the Graces, and Beauty is no more.

panders of their unworthy pleaſures, be the dictators of the times, and the faſhionable preceptors? Shall they be ſuffered to go on, ſpreading poiſon and contagion around us, and ſo far deſtroy the pure *oxygen* of our moral world, by their mephitic breath, as to contaminate the whole maſs of ſociety, and make every thing diſſolve in corruption? No; I rather hope that the good ſenſe of this nation will at laſt deſpiſe thoſe preachers of voluptuouſneſs, ſpurn at their infamous traſh, and degrading precepts, and cultivate a more manly, and a more dignified kind of literature—a literature which will elevate the mind, and purify the heart, and teach us "how to live, and how to die."

It is not, then, the looſe Ionian goſſamer garb of modern faſhion, wanton airs, and levity of manners, which are favourable to female dignity and power; they rather tend to reduce its proper influence, to promote celibacy, and to corrupt the age. For, when this is the temper of the times, it never fails to cauſe libertiniſm, proſtitution, and intrigue, ſo fatal to human happineſs, and to the prevalence of virtuous and honourable attachments. The indecent advances, and immodeſt conduct of a *Phædra* will often make an *Hippolitus*; but the delicacy of ſweet *Dian's* bluſh will even inſpire the *Hermit's* love. If, therefore, the women would preſerve their empire over the men, they muſt religiouſly ſacrifice to the Goddeſs *Modeſty*, by whoſe influence alone their power can be truly preſerved. Let, then,

then, that ſex, whom Nature has adorned with all her moſt delicate and beautiful endowments, formed to embelliſh our orb with a brighter luſtre, and to infuſe into the cup of life, more animation and delight, ſeduloufly cultivate and preſerve that *Grace*, without which all their beauties fade, and all their attractions vaniſh. Let them impreſs upon their minds the ſacred principles of religion and morality; let them preſerve a due ſenſe of their own dignity, let *them be nobly proud*, and even conſider the death of the devoted *Virginia*, leſs to be dreaded than to fall into infamy and contempt, by the baſe ſeducer's arts, and their own criminal paſsions. In ſhort, let us all endeavour, in our various ſituations and callings, to preſerve the purity of our morals, as we conſult our country's glory, and

our domeſtic peace; and while we labour to promote this great work, let us ever remember, that, to reſpect the *marriage ſtate*, is to protect an inſtitution which contributes, more than any other cauſe, to effect this moſt deſirable purpoſe, and which has been always conſidered one of the principal ſupporters of religion, order, decency, and morality, among mankind.

FINIS.

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